PLAYING THE PART OF THE PRINCE

A THANKSGIVING STORY
BY HOWARD FIELDING

When Clifford Ridley, millionaire's son and in his own right richer even than his father, went to ask Deacon Brastow for the hand of his daughter in marriage, he felt a consciousness of rectitude that was distinctly agreeable. Ridley's attentions to Angela Brastow had excited the gossips of the little down east town, but he was going to make that all right on this Thanksgiving afternoon.

He felt like the fairy prince whose duty in the story is to make every one happy. Poor old Deacon Brastow would feel that he had sailed out of all his lifelong worries, and for Angela it would mean a change from the little frame house for which her father hadn't been able to afford a coat of paint in 20 years to a veritable palace and a time of Thanksgiving indeed.

The young New Yorker had an idea that the first part of the interview might not be altogether agreeable, so he had prepared a somewhat hasty declaration of his intentions, but the deacon's unexpectedly prompt and cordial "How de do?" knocked it all out of his head.

"Glad to see you looking so well and so thankful," exclaimed the deacon. "Santiago malaria can't stand this down east air. You ought to give a good account of our climate when you get back to New York."

"I shall," said Ridley, "and of the down east people as well."

"I guess we can return the compliment," rejoined Brastow. "You've made yourself pretty popular hereabouts, except with some of the old ladies. They regard you as a base deceiver."

"I'm afraid my conduct has been open to criticism," he said.

"Yes, it has," replied the deacon. "You got well when all the old women in town had said you were going to die. They'll never forgive you."

"Indeed!" said Ridley, much relieved. "I'm afraid I must plead guilty to that. But it doesn't worry me. You see, I'm not interested in the old ladies, but in one of the very young ladies."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the deacon. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

"It is extremely serious," said Ridley, and then he paused. He did not know just how to take the deacon, who was of a different type in conversation from what he seemed on a casual view.

Ridley had rather avoided him up to this time. Lounging upon the front steps of the deacon's house with Angela and other young people, he had frequently seen Brastow come home to his dinner or supper, but on such occasions the deacon had always hurried by, with an apologetic manner, for the New England parent never intrudes upon his children.

So Mr. Ridley of New York had made the mistake of supposing that Deacon Brastow was of a timid nature and would be embarrassed in his presence. He had expected also that his prospective father-in-law would have a magazine dialect, whereas he pronounced the language with great accuracy, as became one who had been a member of the school committee for many years.

"Serious, is it?" said the deacon. "You don't mean to say that you're in love with Angela?"

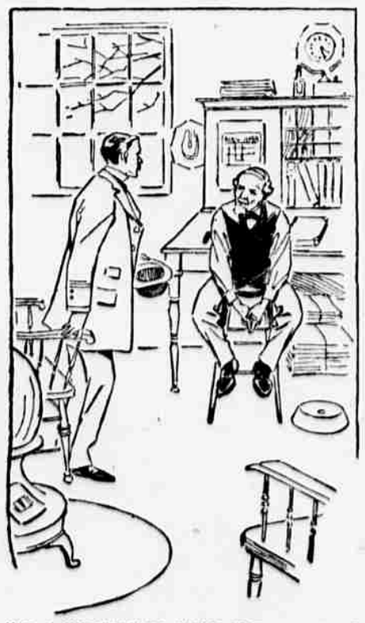
"I mean just that," replied the young man earnestly. "I have thought that you might doubt the sincerity of my intentions, and so"—

"Oh, bless you, no!" said the deacon. "I didn't know you had any; that's all."

"Let me assure you, then," said Ridley, "that my mind is thoroughly made up. I want her for my wife."

The deacon drummed a weird and slow little tune on the desk beside him.

"Too bad, too bad!" said he. "I gave Angela just a bit of a hint that she might



"DO I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU OBJECT TO ME?"

be encouraging you too much, but she said you never got silly. I'm sorry, very sorry, if you're going to feel bad on her account."

Ridley shifted from the wooden armchair in which he had been sitting to another which he found to be equally uncomfortable, so he stood up. The fact is that he was beginning to be nervous. Apparently the character of prince in the fairy story was harder to play than he had supposed. The deacon did not seem particularly thankful to him for the Thanksgiving day blessing he offered. And as for Angela, well—

"Do I understand," said he, "that you object to me as a son-in-law?"

"Object is hardly the word for it," replied the deacon. "If I knew you better, I might object to you, and I might not. I can't say."

"I am pretty well known in New York," rejoined the young man.

Deacon Brastow shook his head.

"Nobody is well known in New York," said he. "I've been there, a good many years ago, but I don't suppose the place has changed for the better. It's got big ger, and that's a disadvantage. Now, for instance, who are your next door neighbors?"

"I live in a bachelor apartment house," replied the young man. "It's more convenient for me, as my father's house is closed most of the time. My people are in Europe or Newport or somewhere else eight or ten months in the year."

"Well, who are some of the other bachelors in this place where you live?" inquired the deacon.

"I don't know many of them," answered Ridley.

"Quiet, sober, respectable people?" asked the deacon.

Ridley could not suppress a smile, for Brastow's adjectives were not precisely those that he would have chosen in describing the tenants of the Cecil apartments.

"I really know very little about their private life," he confessed. "We let each other alone, as a rule."

"You don't know them, and they don't know you," said the deacon. "Now, merely for the sake of the argument, we'll suppose that you wanted to be a burglar or a highwayman. Would any one of them know anything about it?"

"Not till they read about it in the newspapers," said Ridley frankly.

"How does the man who lives right in the next room to you spend his evenings?" queried the deacon blandly.

"Heaven knows!" exclaimed the young man. "I haven't seen him in six months."

"Such a thing couldn't happen here," said Brastow. "Here every one lives in the sight of his neighbors, and his reputation is founded upon every act of his from boyhood up."

"But I also have a reputation," responded Ridley warmly. "Inquire of my business acquaintances on the street and see if you can hear of any act of mine that has not been strictly honorable."

"There is a young man who keeps a store across the street," said the deacon. "His name is Sargent, Samuel Sargent's son. I have an idea that he is rather sweet on Angela and may come some day to see me, as you have done. Suppose I knew no more about him than what the clerk in his store sees between 8 o'clock in the morning and 6 in the evening. Would I feel sure that he was a proper husband for Angela?"

Ridley felt the perspiration starting out on his forehead. He realized that he was engaged in a struggle where defeat was not to be thought of. He had a passing vision of Angela, and it helped him.

"I did not make New York," said he, "nor ask to be born there. Would you deny marriage to all its inhabitants?"

"They might marry among themselves," said the deacon gently. "I don't mean that to be offensive, but you and I on such a subject as this must say what we think."

"As for myself," said Ridley, "I cannot do the impossible, but if you will come to New York I will give you every opportunity to look me up. Here and now I can only say that I have no skeletons in my closet and that I love your daughter. I might speak of certain material advantages, but"—

"Why not?" asked Brastow. "They are important. You are a very rich man, and you could do a good deal for Angela. If this were a matter of business, there would be only one answer I could make. But it isn't. My daughter has never lacked food or shelter, and while I am spared she never shall. Neither has she lacked good, healthy, moral surroundings, and while I have any voice in choosing them she never shall."

"Amen!" said Ridley heartily, and then there was a pause while the two men faced each other in the gathering shadows.

"Deacon Brastow," said Ridley at last, "what shall I do to convince you that I am the right sort of man?"

"I don't know," said the deacon slowly. "You might come down here and live a year or two among us."

"I'd like nothing better," said Ridley, "but my business interests"—

"There it is again," the deacon interrupted. "In New York it is all business. You will live in one world and your wife in another. How many men in New York go home to break bread with their families in the middle of the day? How many pass two evenings a week at their own firesides? You have no homes there unless among the poor."

"My parents are happily married, and"—

"And spend from two to four months a year under their own roof. Where are they enjoying this day of thanks, if it's a fair question?"

"My mother and my younger sister are in Italy or on their way across," said Ridley, "my other sister has gone to Smith college, and my father is in San Antonio, Tex., on a little matter of business."

"I don't think Angela would like that kind of Thanksgiving day, that way of living," said the deacon.

"Let us be clear upon one point," declared the young man—"whatever Angela likes is a law of nature, so far as I am concerned. She shall make such a home as pleases her. And as for my business, let me tell you that affairs in Wall street will be in a condition to make Black Friday a pleasant recollection when they take my thoughts away from her."

"Well," said the deacon doubtfully as he stroked his scanty gray beard, "that sounds encouraging. After this little talk I don't feel quite the same as I did. In fact, for your sake I rather hope that Angela will change her mind."

"Will — change — her — mind!" echoed Ridley in a tone of horror. "You don't mean to say she has already decided?"

The deacon seemed about to answer with some real disclosure. Then he checked the impulse and said:

"You'd better talk with her."

Ridley seized his hat, which had fallen on the floor in the course of this interview, and, jamming it down hard upon his head, he rushed away in search of Angela. She was not at home. She was not in half a dozen other places where he expected to find her. He sought her so earnestly that a rumor arose that Angela Brastow had mysteriously disappeared. Finally he got around to the deacon's house again and found the object of his quest quietly busy with hot biscuits and tea and cold turkey. The young man was invited to partake of these and other refreshments, and when the supper was over he was presently alone with Angela in the sitting room.

"Angela," he said, "I am here tonight with a purpose. It has taken such complete possession of me that I can think and speak of nothing else. If you don't

ANGELA DROPPED THE TONGS.

know what it is, you are alone in that. The air knows it. Every object in this room is aware of it. The very chairs are listening, and the eyes of your great-grandparents up there on the wall are looking straight through my heart. I love you, and I want you to promise to be my wife."

Angela dropped the tongs upon the iron hearth, and they made a noise that was echoed in the old square piano in the corner. For some occult reason these homely sounds assumed an alarming character in the young man's ears, but Angela picked up the tongs very calmly and put them in their proper place with great deliberation.

"You and I," said she, "would never be happy. We shouldn't get along well. Marriage is a very intimate relation," she continued, with an air of maturity that would have been comical in less serious circumstances. "Married people are too much together. They must get dreadfully tired."

Ridley laughed nervously.

"Your father," said he, "seemed to think that we shouldn't be together enough."

"My father is an old man," she replied. "The world has changed since he was young."

"It has, indeed," answered Ridley, "and in no respect more than this of marriage. Married people lead a freer life nowadays. They know the value of an individual existence. You need not be afraid of being tied too closely to me. You shall have every opportunity to lead your own life. You shall have your own apartments, of course, your own servants, your own separate income, and I will come to you or leave you at your lightest word."

She looked at him steadily for a moment, and the glance went through his heart like an icicle. It waked him. He remembered in a flash that this girl was the daughter of the shrewdest race on earth. He saw that by the simplest strategy she had made him disclose what the word marriage had always meant to him, and in the same moment he saw her draw away from him. Then for the first time he was perfectly calm. He was one of those men who are at their best in the worst emergencies.

"I can't imagine a life," said he, "that would be harder for me, but if I can win you on no other promise I will stand by what I have said. Yet let me tell you what I really want. It is a home with you. I don't care where it is or what it is like, but I want it to be ours. You must want me always to be there, and I must fly to it like a bird to the nest. That is the life I want and the life I ask you to share."

If all this had not been true, Angela would not have believed it, but it was true, and she did believe it. Then there was a real love scene, which began in the impulse of two strong young hearts and ended very conventionally in the displaying of an engagement ring. It bore a diamond which to Angela's astonished eyes looked as big as the fire whose light it reflected. But it did not dazzle her.

"I do not want that, Clifford," she said. I want something you have worn and cared for, something that you will miss when it is mine, so that both of us will remember. If it is a ring, you might give me that gold one on your little finger. You've had it so long that it's worn thin."

So the time that was to have been such a time of thanksgiving to the deacon and his daughter was equally as great a time of thanks to the millionaire fairy prince who gave his love a little gold ring worth about $3 and a promise as old as the world. And the deacon when he was informed of the facts said his daughter had acted for the best. At least he hoped so.

Interrupted the Programme.

"Did that thar sharp what give a show in the opry house last night ketch bullets in his teeth as he said he would on his placards?" asked Porcupine Pete.

"He ketched a few," said Lariat Lem, "but not exactly as he allowed he was a-goin to."

"'Nother one of them tenderfoot swindlers, I s'pose."

"Mebby. I dunno. He didn't git fur enough so we could tell whether it was a swindle or not. You see, he begin his pufformance by askin fer some gentlemanly member of the audience to lend him a hat."

"Wot happened then?"

"Well, Dog Faced Dick handed his hat up, and the professor started off by breakin a passel of eggs into it. The bullet ketchin part of the programme happened right thar. The coroner's waitin to hear from his friends in the east, if he has any."—Chicago Times-Herald.

The new variety in taffeta silk has the pliable qualities of a soft foulard, while it is much heavier and more suitable for gowns than the thinner kind.

LATEST LINGERIE.

Clever Parisian Variations of Two Important Garments.

To meet the demand of the luxury loving and prompt paying American the Parisians set the pace in undergarments and do all their labor of construction by hand, but our own manufacturers follow their lead so closely and admirably in machine wrought pieces that it is really a matter more of sentiment than worth that dictates the purchase of the French article.

On both sides of the water the effort is always tending toward a reconciliation between excessive graceful daintiness, that every woman demands, and precautions against bulkiness, that no woman can allow. Turn over a heap of garments all fresh from Paris, and you will find that, though silk is so slightly used in their make up, none save the petticoats perhaps but will run through the circle of a thumb ring.

Everywhere that an inch of goods might be pruned away the artist's scissors have sliced to good effect and with no loss in the charm of the garment. For example, all chemises are sloped to fit the figure like a glove. The newest French pattern shows a novel arrangement by which a tiny side body is introduced under the arm and the seam so skillfully manipulated that it can never act as an irritating cause against tender flesh. To obviate any awkwardness in getting in and out of such a chemise the long slip either buttons or ties on the shoulders or is opened down the front well below the waist line, and this delicate garment is shuffled off as easily as a pinafore.

In taking away from the chemise about the waist line the skirt length has been increased. The long chemise has logically done away with that absurd little exotic in the feminine wardrobe, the short petticoat. She who wears a silk undervest is in comfort bound to adopt a brief tunic under

THE BOLERO CACHE CORSET.

her silk or cambric underskirt, and, though by this device she pares away some bulk at the bust and shoulder line, she doubles the thickness at her waist and hips. With the tight fitting, long skirted chemise the fattest of women gets all the relief she deserves and carries two undergarments instead of three.

Right at the top and bottom all the chemise decoration is done. Some of them are long enough to reach half way to the ankle and have their edges cut in deep vandykes or scallops or wedged shaped tabs, and then to these are applied little wavelets of lace.

Camisole, cache corset or underbody, call that garment what you will, but do not give it any length below the waist line. The prettiest and most useful styles are made in bolero and handkerchief shape, and an exceedingly recent invention in this line is cut to fold fichuwise, but perfectly flat, over the shoulders, across the bust, and, passing under the arms, the ends of it fasten by two flat pearl buttons in the center of the back. Those that button, orthodox fashion, down the front are cut off sharply at the waist, a broad embroidered beading serves as a belt, and through this a ribbon is run for beauty's sake, says the New York Sun, from whose summary of this year's attractions in underwear the illustrations and present fashions are reproduced.

A bride must feel rather cheap when a relative gives her away.—Chicago News.